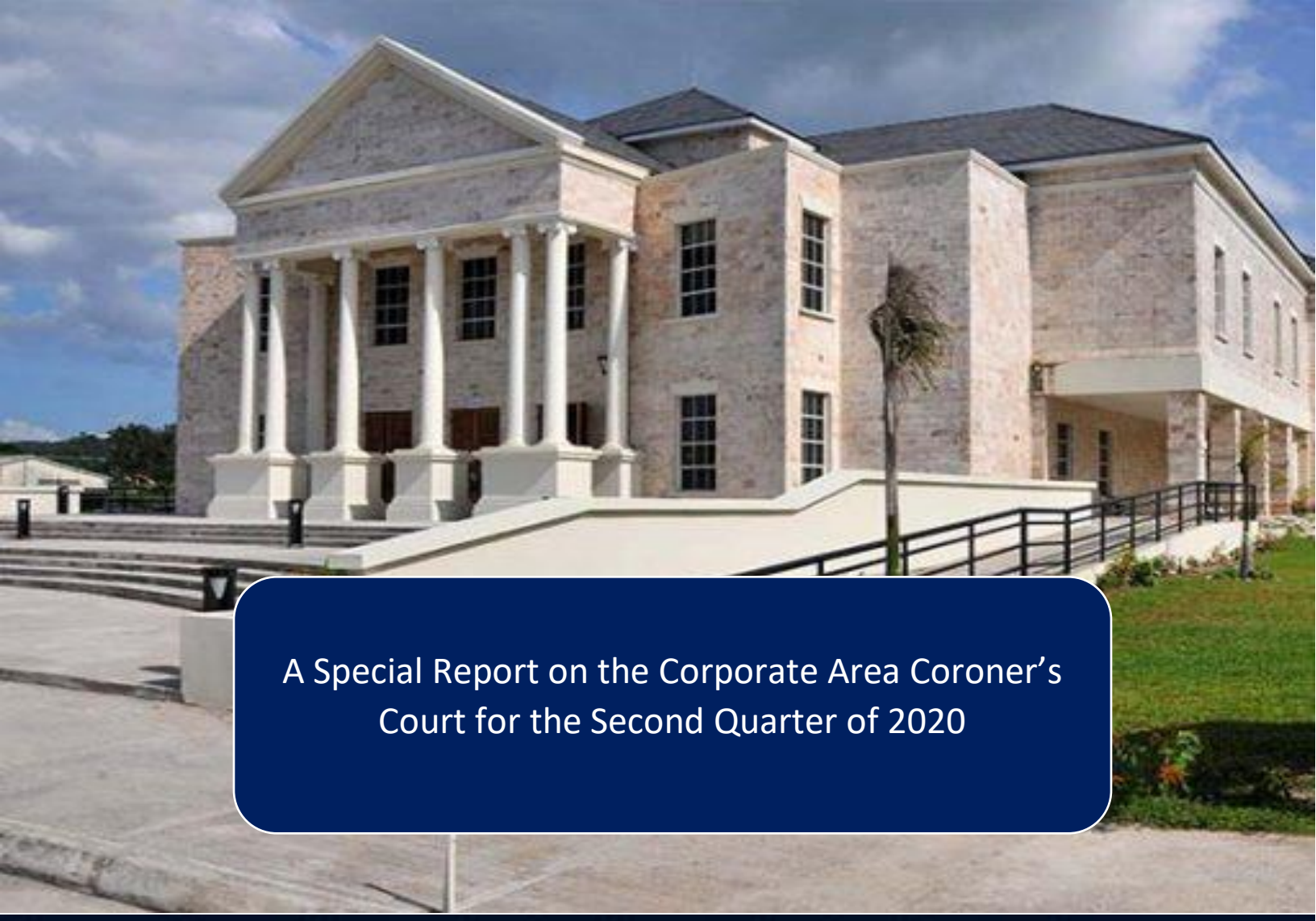

A Special Report on the Corporate Area Coroner's Court for the Second Quarter of 2020

APRIL TO JUNE 2020 (Highlights)

Gross Clearance Rate (%):	**86.89**
Gross Disposal Rate (%):	**69.9**
Average time to disposition (months):	**3.5**

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Executive Summary

Over the past few years, the Corporate Area Coroner's Court has become established as one of the best performing courts in the Jamaican court system, maintaining consistently high case disposal rates and making steady strides in reducing its net case backlog rate. These strides are making a meaningful contribution to the realization of the key objectives set out as part of the strategic plan for the judiciary over the next 4-5 years. The Corporate Area Coroner's Court demonstrated immense resilience amidst the reduction in court activity caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in the second quarter of 2020, recording case clearance rates of 86.79% and a case disposal rate of roughly 70%. The court also recorded an estimated average time to disposition of 3.5 months for cases resolved in the period.

The steady progression in the metrics of the Corporate Area Coroner's Court over the past few years suggests that this court is making significant progress towards reducing its net case backlog to below the 5% mark. This would be consistent with one of the main macro quantitative targets of the judiciary, as outlined in the strategic plan. Among the other vital macro quantitative targets set out in this strategic plan is the attainment of a court-wide case clearance rate of 130% and a court-wide trial date certainty rate of 95%. The current trend established at the Corporate Area Coroner's Court suggests a value added contribution towards attainment of these goals, its relatively small volumes notwithstanding.

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to detail the vital statistics on case activity in the Corporate Area Coroner's Court for the second quarter of 2020. The report includes a range of productivity and time lag measures of the courts as well as related resource allocation and usage and other miscellaneous measurements. Ultimately, these measures seek to tell the story of the case flow in the Coroner's Court, particularly with respect to the disposals, case delay factors and other important elements of case progression management and outcomes. The Coroner's Court operates in all parishes across the island, however this report is focused on the Corporate Area Coroner's Court. The Coroners Court is the arm of the courts that rules on the cause of death of individuals under various circumstances. It is of note that the Coroner's Court, like all others was adversely impacted by the downturn in court activity caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, the results reported in this document may not entirely constitute the basis for generalizations about the performance and current standing of the Corporate Area Coroner's Court. Nevertheless, the results provide useful insights.

Case Activity in the Corporate Area Coroner's Court for the second quarter of 2020

Table 1.0: Summary of time interval between date death reported and date case opened for the quarter ended June 30, 2020

Descriptive statistics (in days)

Number of observations	37
Mean	887.1351
Std. Error of Mean	257.38360
Median	420.0000
Mode	494.00[a]
Std. Deviation	1565.60333
Skewness	4.325
Std. Error of Skewness	.388
Range	8953.00
Minimum	129.00
Maximum	9082.00

The table above provides a descriptive summary of the time taken between the date deaths were reported and the date that the cases for investigation of causes of death were opened in court at the Corporate Area Coroner's Court in the second quarter of 2020. It is seen that from a sample of 37 observations, the average time taken between the date deaths were reported and the date that the associated cases were opened in Corporate Area Coroner's Court was roughly 887 days or 2.5 years. The modal time taken was 494 days or 1.4 years and the median was 420 days or 1.2 years. The standard deviation stands at a high of 1566 days or 4.4 years, strongly suggesting that the distribution of the times between reporting of death and the date the case opens in the court varies widely around the overall mean. The high positive skewness further suggests that decisively more of the scores fall below the overall average, a result that is not surprising considering that the modal and median values are significantly below the overall mean. The

maximum time shown between date deaths reported and date case opened is approximately 25 years, while the lowest is 129 days.

Table 2.0: Case Activity for the second quarter ended June 30, 2020

Number of new cases filed	Number of active cases	Number of disposed or inactive cases (from those filed in the quarter)	Case Disposal Rate (%)
53	**16**	**37**	**69.91**

The above table provides a summary of the cases filed at the Corporate Area Coroner's Court in the second quarter of 2020. It is shown that 53 new cases were filed over the quarter, 37 of which were disposed or became inactive and 16 remained active at the end of the quarter. These results yield an estimated case disposal rate of 69.91%, which is comparatively modest, suggesting that for every 10 cases filed over the period, roughly 7 were disposed. This outcome will augur well for the productivity of the Coroner's court. The case clearance rate will be examined later in this document.

Table 3.0: Sampling distribution of the source of cases filed in the second quarter ended June 30, 2020

Source	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Other	28	59.57
Family Members	19	40.43
Total	**47**	**100.00**

A sample of 47 cases filed at the Corporate Area Coroner's Court shows that 19 or 37.50% were filed by the family of deceased, while 28 or 62.50% were filed by other entities.

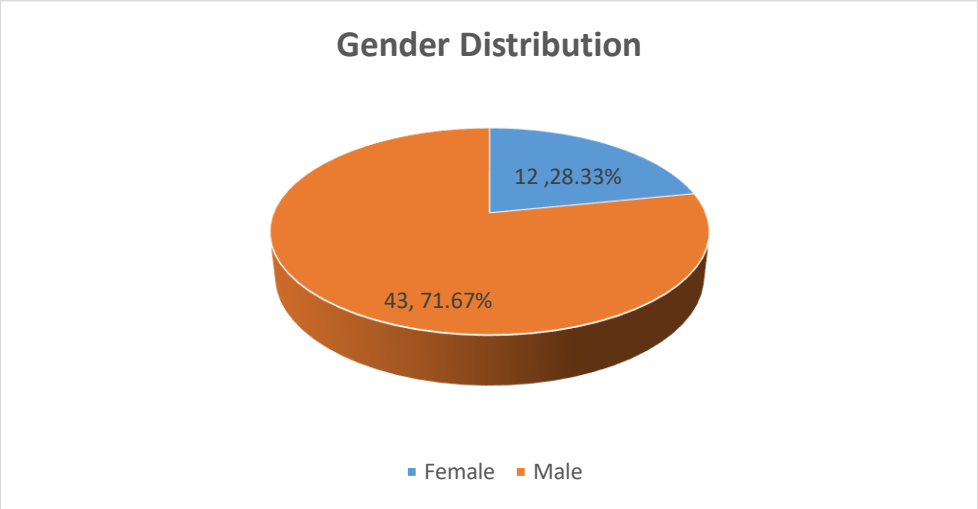
Table 4.0: Sampling distribution of deaths reported at various Police and brought before the court during the second quarter ended June 30, 2020

Police Station	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Denham Town Police Station	10	19.23
Denham Town C.I.B	5	9.62
Rockfort Police Station	4	7.69
Rollington Town Police Station	4	7.69
Constant Spring Police Station	3	5.77
Bull Bay Police Station	2	3.85
Elletson Road C.I.B.	2	3.85
Elletson Road Police Station	2	3.85
Half-Way Tree CIB	2	3.85
Half-Way Tree Police Station	2	3.85
Harbour View Police Station	2	3.85
Kingston Central Police Station	2	3.85
Vineyard Town Police Station	2	3.85
Sub-total	**42**	**80.77**

Sample of police stations (n) = 52

The data showed a sample of 52 Coroner's Court cases reported at the different Police stations in the Corporate Area which were subsequently brought to the Corporate Area Coroner's Court. Of that number, the Denham Town police station accounted for the highest proportion of cases filed/investigated within the period with 10 cases or 19.23%. The Denham Town C.I.B. accounted for 5 or 9.62% of the cases followed by the Rockfort and Rollington Town police stations with 4 cases each or 8.70% of the sample. The top five police stations accounting for cases filed at the Corporate Area Coroner's Court was rounded off by the Constant Spring Police stations with 3 cases or 5.77% of the sample.

Chart 1.0: Distribution of gender of the deceased for new cases filed in the second quarter of 2020



The above chart summarizes gender distribution, using a sample of 55 deceased persons involved in the cases filed over the second quarter of 2020. It is shown that 43 or 71.67% of the deceased were male, while 12 or 28.33% were female.

Table 5.0: Descriptive Statistics on the age distribution of the deceased in cases filed during the second quarter ended June 30, 2020

Descriptive statistics (age in years)

Number of observations	49
Mean	52.4701
Std. Error of Mean	3.34067
Median	52.0000
Mode	23.00[a]
Std. Deviation	23.38466
Skewness	.008
Std. Error of Skewness	.340
Range	97.96
Minimum	.04
Maximum	98.00

a Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

A sample of 49 ages of the deceased involved in the cases filed at the Corporate Area Coroner's Court in the second quarter of 2020, revealed that the average age is roughly 54 years, while the median is 53 years and the modal value is 23 years. The standard deviation stands at a moderate value of roughly 23 years, indicating some amount of variation of the scores around the mean, while the skewness is a low positive value, indicating that most of the scores are clustered around the mean. The smallest age in the data set is 13 days, while the oldest is 98 years.

Table 6.0a: Sampling distribution of the causes of death reported for matters filed during the second quarter ended June 30, 2020

Cause of Death	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gunshot wound of head neck and torso	9	16.67
Shock and hemorrhage, Polytrauma, Multiple blunt force wounds and multiple gunshot wounds	7	12.96
Multiple gunshot wounds	5	9.26
Blunt impact trauma of the head	3	5.56
Acute Heart Failure Atherosclerotic Coronary Heart Disease, Hypertensive Heart disease, Diabetes mellitus	3	5.56
Total	**27**	**50.00**

Sample size (n)= 54

The above table is computed using a sample of 54 observations of the causes of death associated with cases. It is shown that among the most common causes of death reported are death caused by multiple gunshot wounds to the head, neck and torso with 16.67%, shock and hemorrhage, polytrauma, multiple blunt force wounds and multiple gunshot wounds with 12.96% and multiple gunshot wounds 9.26%. It is important to note that there may often be variances between the causes of death as reported and the causes of death as determined by the coroner.

Table 6.0b: Sampling distribution of the causes of death as determined by the coroner for matters filed during the second quarter ended June 30, 2020

Cause of death determined by Coroner	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Death due to gunshot wounds	10	27.03
Death due to Natural Causes	9	24.32
Death due to Motor vehicle accident	3	8.11
Death due to heart attack	2	5.41
Death due to hypertension	2	5.41
Death due to Pneumonia	2	5.41
Total	**28**	**75.68**

Sample size (n) = 37

The above table is computed using a sample of 37 observations of the causes of death as determined by the coroner associated with cases. It is shown that among the most common causes of death reported are death due to gunshot wounds with 10 or 27.03%, death due to natural causes with 9 or 24.32% and death due to motor vehicle accident with 3 or 8.11%. Death due to heart attack, hypertension and pneumonia all accounted for 2 or 5.41% each of the sample.

Table 7: Sampling distribution of the summary of outcomes of Form D applications made during second quarter ended June 30, 2020

Outcomes	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Section 14	25	67.57
Other	12	32.43
Total	**37**	**100.00**

During the processing of a case at the Coroner's Court, a form D application is made which the judge reviews in order to determine the direction of the case thereafter. The above table

provides a summary of the outcomes of these applications over the period under examination. It is seen in the above table that the dominant outcome from the Form D application were decisions in accordance with Section 14, with 25 or 67.57% which means that the matter was accepted for an Inquest to be carried out by the Coroner. The generic category 'other outcomes' accounted for the remaining 12 or 32.43% of the sample. These results are typical to the trends observed in the Coroner's Courts Island wide. The data was computed using a sample of 37 new cases filed in the second quarter of 2020.

Table 8.0: Sampling distribution of reasons for adjournment/continuance for cases heard during the second quarter of 2020

Reasons for adjournment/continuance	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Other	21	87.50%
File incomplete/awaiting medical certificate	2	8.33%
Part-heard (continuance)	1	4.17%
Total	**24**	**100.00%**

A sample of adjournments in the above tale reveals that there were 24 incidences of adjournments. Otherwise from adjournments due to "other reasons", adjournments due to files incomplete/awaiting medical certificate accounted for 2 or 8.33%, while a continuance (delays intrinsic to the progression of a case) for part heard accounted for the remaining 4.17% of the sample.

Table 9.0: Sampling distribution of the type of hearings in the second quarter ended June 30, 2020

Type of hearing	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Chambers	55	100.0
Total	**55**	**100.0**

A sample of 55 hearings at the Corporate Area Coroner's Court in the second quarter of 2020, revealed that all were chamber hearings.

Table 10.0a: Sampling distribution of the methods of disposition of matters completed during the second quarter ended June 30, 2020

Methods of Disposition	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Section 14	16	53.33
Section 10	13	43.33
Open Court Verdict	1	3.33
Total	**30**	**100.00**

The methods of case disposition for a sample of 30 matters, which were disposed during second quarter of 2020, revealed that 16 or 53.33% of matters were disposed by way of an inquest under the provisions of Section 14 of the Coroner's Court Act. Matters disposed by way of inquest under the provision of Section 10 of the Coroner's Court Act followed this with 13 or 43.33% of the sample and open court verdict accounted for the remaining 3.33% of the sample.

Table 10.0a: Descriptive Statistics on the time taken to disposition as at June 30, 2020

Descriptive Statistics (days)

Number of observations	30
Mean	106.6429
Median	46.5000
Mode	17.00
Std. Deviation	107.27363
Variance	11507.632
Skewness	.591
Std. Error of Skewness	.597
Range	268.00
Minimum	1.00
Maximum	269.00

The above data set summarizes the time to disposition for a sample of cases resolved in the Coroner's Court during the second quarter of 2020. Using a sample of 30 cases resolved during the quarter, the average time to disposition was roughly 107 days or 3.5 months, when an equivalent standard deviation. Although this outcome is not generalizable, it is a strong show of resilience. Proportionately more of the scores in the data set fell below the overall mean as conferred by the modest positive skewness observed.

Table 11.0: Summary of the incidence of hearings during inquest over the second quarter ended June 30, 2020

Number of observations	33
Mean	1.8182
Std. Error of Mean	.35209
Median	1.0000
Mode	1.00
Std. Deviation	2.02260
Skewness	2.266
Std. Error of Skewness	.409
Range	7.00
Minimum	1.00

Maximum	8.00

The frequency with which cases are heard potentially slows down the rate of case clearance and the average time taken to dispose of cases and ids therefore, a vital statistical indicator of both the probability of case disposition and roadblock to case progression. In the above table, it is seen that the average number of hearings in inquest from a sample of 33 cases disposed over the quarter was roughly 2, while the median and modal values are both 1. The lowest number of hearings was 1 and the highest was 8. The standard deviation suggests there is some amount of variation in the scores and affirmed by the positive skewness which suggests that proportionately more of the scores fell below the overall mean.

Table 12: Case clearance rate summary for the second quarter ended June 30, 2020

Approximate number of new cases filed	Approximate number of cases disposed	Estimated Case Clearance Rate (%)
53	**46**	**86.79**

Courts that consistently maintain an average case clearance rate of between 90%-110% long enough will at a minimum have its disposals keeping up with the number of new cases filed but may also likely make considerable strides in reducing its case backlog rate to an acceptable rate of under 10% of active cases. The Corporate Area Coroner's Court with an estimated case clearance rate of 86.79%, fell just below the above-mentioned range for the quarter. There were 53 new cases filed during the quarter and 46 cases were disposed (regardless of year of origin), leading to the stated clearance rate. It suggests that for every 10 new cases filed between 8 and 9 cases were disposed over the same period.

Conclusion

The Corporate Area Coroner's Court has established itself among Jamaica's high performing courts, recording consistently high clearance rates over the past few years and making significant strides in eliminating its net case backlog. The report reveals that even with the significantly reduced court activity in the second quarter of 2020, the Corporate Area Coroner's Court managed to achieve a comparatively high case clearance rate of 86.79%, disposing 46 cases while, 53 were filed. Equally impressive is that the Corporate Area Coroner's Court achieved a case disposal rate of roughly 70% for the second quarter. Although the output from the second quarter of 2020 are not entirely generalizable, they are nonetheless quite insightful and affirms the resilient positioning of the Corporate Area Coroner's Court. The third and fourth quarters of 2020 hold promising outcomes for this Court as case activity starts to regain some semblance of normality. It is expected that the Corporate Area Coroner's Court will make an appreciable contribution to the strategic vision of the courts in reducing the net case backlog rate to less than 5% within the next 4-5 years. Indeed, the Corporate Area Coroner's Court is poised be an example of a court with zero backlog by March 31, 2022.

Glossary of Statistical Terms

Clearance rate: The ratio on incoming to outgoing cases or of new cases filed to cases disposed, regardless of when the disposed cases originated. For example, in a given Term 100 new cases were filed and 110 were disposed (including cases originating before that Term) the clearance rate is 110/100 or 110%.

Note: The clearance rate could therefore exceed 100% but the disposal rate has a maximum value of 100%.

A persistent case clearance rate of less than 100% will eventually lead to a backlog of cases in the court system. The inferred international benchmark for case clearance rates is an average of 90%-110 annualized. This is a critical foundation to backlog prevention in the court system. [i]

Disposal rate: As distinct from clearance rate, the disposal rate is the proportion of new cases filed which have been disposed in a particular period. For example, if 100 new cases are filed in a particular Term and 80 of those cases were disposed in said Term, then the disposal rate is 80%.

Note: A persistent case clearance rate of less than 100% will eventually lead to a backlog of cases in the court system.[ii]

Trial/hearing date certainty: This is the proportion of dates set for trial or hearing which proceed without adjournment. For example, if 100 trial dates are set in a particular Term and 40 are adjourned, then the trial certainty rate would be 60%. The international standard for this measure is between 92% and 100%.

Courtroom utilization rate: The proportion of courtrooms in full use on a daily basis or the proportion of hours utilized in a courtroom on a daily basis. The international standard for this rate is 100%.

Case congestion rate: The ratio of pending cases to cases disposed in a given period. It is an indication of how fatigued a court is, given the existing state of resources and degree of efficiency. A case congestion rate of 150% for example, is an indication that given the resources currently at a court's disposal and its degree of efficiency, it is carrying 1.5 times its capacity.

Case File Integrity Rate: Measures the proportion of time that a case file is fully ready and available in a timely manner for a matter to proceed. Hence, any adjournment, which is due to the lack of readiness of a case file or related proceedings for court at the scheduled time, impairs the case file integrity rate. The international benchmark for the casefile integrity is 100%

Standard deviation: This is a measure of how widely spread the scores in a data set are **around** the average value of that data set. The higher the standard deviation, the higher the variation of the raw scores in the data set, from the average score. A low standard deviation is an indication that the scores in a data set are clustered around the average.

Outlier: An outlier is a value that is either too small or too large, relative to the majority of scores/trend in a data set.

Skewness: This is measure of the distribution of scores in a data set. It gives an idea of where the larger proportion of the scores in a data set can be found. Generally, if skewness is positive as revealed by a positive value for this measure, this suggests that a greater proportion of the scores in the data set are at the lower end. If the skewness is negative as revealed by a negative value for this measure, it generally suggests that a greater proportion of the scores are at the higher end. If the skewness measure is approximately 0, then there is roughly equal distribution of scores on both the higher and lower ends of the average figure.

Range: This is a measure of the spread of values in a data set, calculated as the highest minus the lowest value. A larger range score may indicate a higher spread of values in a data set.

Case backlog: A case that is in the court system for more than two years without disposition. The **gross backlog rate** measures the proportion of all cases filed within a given period which remain unresolved for a period of over two years. The **net backlog rate** on the other hand measures the proportion of active cases filed in a given period which are unresolved for over two years.

Percentile Rank: This refers to the percentage of scores that are equal to or less than a given score. Percentile ranks, like percentages, fall on a continuum from 0 to 100. For example, a percentile rank of 45 indicates that 45% of the scores in a distribution of scores fall at or below the score at the 35th percentile.

Percentile ranks are useful when you want to quickly understand how a particular score compares to the other scores in a distribution of scores. For instance, knowing a court disposed 300 cases in a given period doesn't tell you much. You don't know how many case disposals were

possible, and even if you did, you wouldn't know how that court's score compared to the rest of the courts. If, however, you were told that the court scored at the 80th percentile, then you would know that this court did as well or better than 80% of the courts in case disposals.

Difference between percentage and percentile changes: The difference between percentage and percentage points, the latter is strictly used to compare two percentages, for example, if the clearance rate in 2018 was 89% and the clearance rate in 2019 is 100%, then the appropriate expression to compare these would be "an 11 percentage points increase". However, if we are comparing two absolute numbers, say, 1000 cases were disposed in 2018, and 1500 in 2019, then there would be a 50% increase in cases disposed.

Weighted Average: Weighted average is a calculation that takes into account the varying degrees of significance of the groups or numbers in a data set. In calculating a weighted average for a particular variable, the individual scores or averages for each group are multiplied by the weight or number of observations in each of those groups, and summed. The outcome is then divided by the summation of the number of observations in all groups combined. For example, if we wish to calculate the weighted average clearance rate for the parish courts, the product of the clearance rate and number of cases for each court are computed, added, and then divided by the total number of cases across all the parish courts. This means that a court with a larger caseload has a greater impact on the case clearance rate than a smaller court.

A weighted average can be more accurate than a simple average in which all numbers in a data set are assigned an identical weight.

Continuance and Adjournment: In a general sense, any delay in the progression of a hearing in which a future date/time is set or anticipated for continuation is a form of adjournment. However, in order to make a strict distinction between matters which are adjourned for procedural factors and those which are generally avoidable, court statistics utilizes the terms 'continuance' and 'adjournment'. Here, 'continuance' is used strictly to describe situations in which future dates are set due to procedural reasons and 'adjournments' is used to describe the circumstances in which future dates of appearance are set due to generally avoidable reasons. For example, adjournments for another stage of hearing, say from a plea and case management hearing to a trial hearing or from the last date of trial to a sentencing date are classified as 'continuance' but delays for say, missing or incomplete files, due to outstanding medical reports or attorney absenteeism are classified as 'adjournments'. Adjournments as defined in this document have an adverse effect on hearing date certainty rates but continuances do not.

[i] *Source: http://courts.mi.gov/Administration/SCAO/Resources/Documents/bestpractice/BestPracticeCaseAgeClearanceRates.pdf*

[ii] *Source: http://courts.mi.gov/Administration/SCAO/Resources/Documents/bestpractice/BestPracticeCaseAgeClearanceRates.pdf*